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Congress of the United States
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Washington, DC 20515

June 8, 2011

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Richard H. Anderson
Chief Executive Officer
Delta Airlines
1030 Delta Boulevard
Atlanta, GA 30320-6001

Dear Mr. Anderson:

I was extremely disappointed and frustrated to learn today that Delta Airlines charged members of the military returning from Afghanistan \$2,800 in baggage fees. These brave men and women put their lives on the line for our safety and security, and this is no way to welcome them home.

The soldiers returning home from Afghanistan were charged the \$2,800 because 14 of them had to check a fourth bag and were charged \$200 a piece for the fourth checked bag. I'm glad to hear that Delta has just changed this policy and will now allow members of the military to check up to 4 bags for free in economy and 5 bags for free in First and Business Class. However, these soldiers have not been refunded the \$2,800 they were charged. As a member of Congress and frequent Delta flyer, I urge Delta Airlines to refund this money to these soldiers immediately. I have flown hundreds of thousands of miles on Delta and Northwest since being elected to Congress. Delta's response to this problem will have a significant impact on my future choice of airlines. If Delta doesn't reimburse these soldiers and reconsider its approach to servicing our troops, I'll have to reconsider using their service.

Even if Delta was operating within its policy, I believe we all have an obligation to returning service members – not just to thank them for their service, but to also ensure that they're not faced with any undue burden on their return. That's why I urge Delta to refund this money to our soldiers immediately.

To illustrate why these young men and women are so important to me, I'm sending you a copy of an Op-Ed I wrote for the Huffington Post. The title speaks for itself: "Why I have the Best Job in the World." The experience I wrote about took place on a Delta flight from Atlanta to Chicago. Thank you for your attention to this request.

Sincerely,


Bruce L. Braley
Member of Congress

Rep. Bruce Braley

U.S. Representative from Iowa's 1st District

Why I Have the Greatest Job in the World

Posted: 05/18/11 10:39 AM ET

Being a Congressman is an incredible honor -- but I won't lie, there are some tough parts to the job. One of them is the time away from my family and the constant travel. Routine helps, and mine is mostly consistent: every week after I cast my last vote for the week, I hop a flight home to see my family in Iowa.

Typically it's uneventful, and most of the time it's pretty painless with short stopovers in Chicago, Atlanta or Detroit. But last Friday, the 13th, was very different. It wasn't quite *Freaky Friday*... more like *Planes, Trains and Automobiles*, but like something out of a movie nonetheless.

Here's the real-life script, which explains why I have the best job in the world:

Friday, May 13th

1:00 pm: I cast my last vote in the House, drive to the airport and board a flight to Atlanta for a short layover on my way to the Quad City Airport in Moline.

3:00 pm: I get in to Atlanta on time, but my flight to Moline is delayed for an hour.

3:15 pm: The flight board posts another delay; this time it's three hours -- the weather is horrendous in the Midwest, the airline announcement says.

I glance over and see a young man in military fatigues wearing a Red Bulls patch -- he's got to be a soldier from the 34th Infantry Division of the Iowa National Guard. I introduce myself and meet Staff Sgt. Nathan Rose from Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, who landed from Kuwait on his way home from Afghanistan for a two-week leave to see his family. He's been trying to fly home since 9 am. All his flights are cancelled. I thank him for his sacrifice, give him my card and let him know to be in touch if I can ever help.

3:30 pm: My flight to Moline is finally officially cancelled, and there are no good options to get home. I decide to jump on the 7:30 pm flight to Chicago, rent a car and drive the three hours to Moline. I notice Sgt. Rose on the phone trying to rebook his flight. I offer him a ride home from Chicago if he wants one. He accepts. We wait to get his new boarding pass.

6:00 pm: We ride the airport train to the T terminal, walk to the gate and not surprisingly, our flight to Chicago is delayed until 8:30 pm. I inform Sgt. Rose he will be joining me at a nearby restaurant so I can buy him dinner, and there will be no negotiations on this point.

7:30 pm: We're back to the gate to find out our flight is delayed until at least 10:30 pm.

9:30 pm: I get my boarding pass and see an "UP" next to my name. With all the miles I log flying between Iowa and Washington, I've been upgraded to first class.

10:00 pm: As the first class passengers start to board, I ask Sgt. Rose if he has his boarding pass and swap his for mine saying, "They're calling your row."

He tries to hand it back to me (as I knew he would) I say, "Don't make me order you," even though he knows I can't. I know his day has been far more stressful than mine.

I take his seat in 44C -- the last row of the plane -- and spend the flight next to a very harried young mother, a baby and a little boy named Eddie whom I got to know quite well.

10:45 pm (local time): We land in Chicago and walk the 20 miles through O'Hare (if you've ever been there, you know what I'm talking about) and jump on the rental car shuttle.

11:00 pm: We arrive at the rental car counter and wait in a long line of other desperate passengers who made last-minute reservations. As I fill out the paperwork, I hear someone say "Did someone leave a black gym bag on the shuttle?" I look down and realize I don't have my black gym bag.

11:30 pm: The shuttle returns with my gym bag, and it's off to the races.

11:35 pm: Sgt. Rose and I head west toward Iowa in a steady rain. He tells me about his family and his studies at the University of Iowa when he's not deployed overseas. This is his second combat tour, and he has seen grim duty in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

Sgt. Rose tells me he has a passion for foreign policy. I tell him he should be getting graduate credit for real-world academic experience. He laughs. He knows I'm right -- just as he knows it won't happen.

I met a lot of bright, compassionate young people like Sgt. Rose on my recent trip to Afghanistan. I worry that our 10-year investment in Afghanistan does not measure up to the heroic sacrifices of Sgt. Rose and his peers.

Saturday, May 14th

2:45 am: We finally arrive at Sgt. Rose's place near Iowa City, and his last words to me are "I don't know how I can ever repay you."

I got all the thanks I needed when Sgt. Rose walked into his home and into the arms of his girlfriend. The door shut, I turned the car around, and headed back east to Davenport.

4:00 am: After a harrowing hour-long ride to Davenport, I finally make it to my hotel room.

Sixteen hours of traveling, endless delays, torrential rains -- to most travelers, this sounds like the Trip from Hell. For me, it was a trip I'll never forget, and it will always be the best Friday the 13th of

my life. Spending time with Sgt. Rose and helping him get home to see his family was worth every minute.

To Sgt. Rose, I'm probably Del Griffith -- the nosy, obnoxious shower curtain ring salesman in *Planes, Trains and Automobiles*. All I know is I slept soundly when my head finally hit the pillow.

And that is why I have the greatest job in the world.



http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rep-bruce-braley/why-i-have-the-greatest-j_b_863536.html